

# CULTURAL CROSSROADS

A PUBLICATION OF THE MAYOR'S MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ■ CITY OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA ■ WINTER 2005

Hate crimes are an especially insidious type of crime. A person is targeted not for their actions, but for who they are. In our increasingly diverse community, many are striving to create an atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation. But unfortunately, we have experienced hate-motivated crimes in Lincoln.

Hate crimes are taken very seriously by the Lincoln Police Department. In 2004, Lincoln had 20 reported hate crimes. Seven were based on race, five on ethnicity, two on religion and six on sexual orientation. Physical assaults almost always accompany attacks related to perceived sexual orientation.

A comparison of statistics from other communities tells an interesting story. For the same period, Kearney reported 18 hate crimes, and Omaha reported five. Elsewhere in the nation, Kansas City reported two, St. Louis 11, Des Moines one and Denver seven. Does this mean that our community experiences more hate crimes? No. These figures indicate the community's efforts to document these crimes. What we are seeing here in Nebraska is a positive sign that some communities are more willing to recognize the problems exist.

I firmly believe that education is our strongest tool to combat hate. I have organized a Hate Crimes Task Force to look into the City's options to help reduce hate crime and prosecute those who commit hate crimes against Lincoln's diverse citizens. This Task Force, spearheaded by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community, is working to strengthen outreach and increase public education.

We have already begun implementing Task Force recommendations. The topic of hate crimes has been added to the City's new ACTION online complaint system, which can be accessed at [lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov). I encourage everyone to watch a show on hate crimes we recently taped on 5 CITY-TV (see details on page two).

Our community has a history of celebrating diversity and combating bigotry and hatred. An example is the City's response to a visit by a white supremacist organization in the summer of 2004. The same organization prompted riots and substantial property damage recently in Toledo, Ohio. In Lincoln, the community came together to create a counter event, the "No Place for Hate" rally, to prevent violence and celebrate Lincoln's diversity. The rally has become an annual event. (For information on this year's event, see page two.)

The community must again come together to send a message that Lincoln is no place for hate crimes. I hope you will work with us to respect all citizens who have valuable contributions to make to the life of our city.



## WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

A "hate crime" is a criminal offense that is committed against another person because of his or her perceived race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability or because of the person's association to one of these groups. The term "hate crime" has both a common sense meaning and a legal one. From an everyday use standpoint, most people think of a hate crime as any crime in which the victim was targeted because of one of the aforementioned descriptors.

The Lincoln Police Department investigates all crimes that are reported, and part of that investigation includes gathering and recording information about the motivation behind the crime. When evidence suggests that a crime was motivated in whole or in part by hate, bias or discrimination, this information is included in the reports that are sent to prosecuting attorneys for their consideration on what charges to file and whether "enhanced" sentencing is sought in the event of a conviction. From a legal standpoint, Nebraska law provides that when certain crimes are committed because of these factors, the penalty for that crime can be enhanced by the sentencing court to the next higher level. This enhanced penalty is allowed against those persons who are convicted of a crime where it's proven beyond reasonable doubt that their intention was to commit the crime because of one of the above classifications.

*Continued on page 2.*

*Coleen J. Sang*



Continued from page 1.

Calling a person a certain slur or epithet is not one of the offenses for which authorities can pursue a hate crime or enhanced penalty, but law enforcement can investigate a "disturbing the peace" violation, so police should be contacted. The offenses that can be investigated with a hate crime enhancement include manslaughter, assault, terroristic threats, stalking, kidnaping, false imprisonment, sexual assault, arson, vandalism or trespassing. The victim must be willing to make a report with the Lincoln Police Department for an investigation to ensue. Upon an arrest, the victim may have to testify in court against the person responsible. The charge will be filed with the County Attorney's office, and if it can be proven the crime was committed because of a person's minority status, the enhanced penalty will be pursued in sentencing. These types of crimes are not filed as violations of City ordinances, but as violations of State statutes so that the hate crimes enhancement can be pursued.



## HOW TO REPORT HATE CRIMES

If you believe you have been the victim of a hate crime, please contact the Lincoln Police Department. In emergency situations, always call 911. A crime can be called in any time to 441-6000. For more information, call the LPD Service Desk at 441-7204 daily (including holidays and weekends) from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Staff from the LPD Victim/Witness Unit are available during regular business hours at 441-7181. Your identity can remain confidential until you decide to pursue an investigation or file a police report.



**"Our Community with Mayor Seng" on 5 CITY-TV** (cable channel 5) featured a discussion on hate crimes in November. The program is available through the "video on demand" feature on the City Web site, [lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov). Click on the 5 CITY-TV logo on the home page to access the program. Mayor Seng and Diane Gonzolas of the Citizen Information Center interviewed Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady; City Ombudsman Lin Quenzer, who is on the Mayor's Hate Crimes Task Force and is a representative of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community; and Dr. Paul Bajwa, a member of Lincoln's Sikh community whose family was the victim of a hate crime. *(To access the video, you must have Real Player G2 or better on your computer, and your connection to the Internet must have a 28.8K modem or better.)*

## LINCOLN IS NO PLACE FOR HATE

MAC Chair Amir Azimi and Leola Bullock, right, were two of the participants in the 2005 "No Place for Hate" rally July 16 at Antelope Park. The 2006 "No Place for Hate" rally is tentatively scheduled to take place in September. For more information, contact Susan Scott at the YWCA, 434-3494, extension 111.

*"New Vision" directed by Rashad McPherson.*



# MEET THE MAC

working for full and equal partnership of people of diverse racial, cultural, economic, gender and disabled communities



**Modesta Putla**

Modesta Putla is the Executive Director for Lincoln's Asian Community and Cultural Center, the only agency in Nebraska providing resources for the Asian community, including Asian Americans, Amer-Asians, Eurasians and other members of the Asian population. Modesta has 24 years of experience working with international organizations in the field of community and social development programs. Those organizations include the United Nations, CARE and the British Council of the British High Commission. She has attended many international conferences and represented the UN at a 1999 conference in London. One of her papers, "Adolescents and Female Age at Marriage in India," was accepted to present at the International Conference on Feminist Utopias in Toronto in 2000. Modesta has a master's degree in social sciences.

## MLK JR. YOUTH RALLY AND MARCH SCHEDULED

The public is encouraged to participate in the 11th annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Youth Rally and March Monday, January 16. This year's theme is "His Mandate, Our Mission – It's More than a Dream, We're Living His Legacy!" The scheduled includes:

- 8:45 a.m.** - Doors open for a pre-rally program in the ballroom of the UNL Student Union, 14th and "R" streets.
- 10 a.m.** - March to the State Capitol.
- 10:30 a.m.** - "Call to Rally" program in the Capitol's east legislative chamber.

The program at the Capitol will include recognition of the award winners in the fourth annual MLK, Jr. art, poetry and expression contests for youth. The contests give students from pre-kindergarten age through 12th grade the opportunity to creatively display their views of the passion, vision and contributions of King.

For more information on the contests and events, contact Pete Ferguson at 441-4664 or [pferguson@leadershiplincoln.org](mailto:pferguson@leadershiplincoln.org)

## Make it a day ON, not a day OFF!

**Other events honoring Dr. King:**

- 13th annual Freedom Breakfast** - 7:30 a.m., Friday, January 13, Embassy Suites. Advance tickets required - 472-5126.
- State Celebration** - 11:45 a.m., Friday, January 13, State Capitol, 471-2035.
- UNL Chancellor's program** - 2 p.m., Monday, January 16, Ross Media Arts Center. For information on this and other UNL events, call 472-0085, 472-6151 or 472-9315.
- Community Worship Service** - 7 p.m., Monday, January 16, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 3301 North 56th, 467-0274.

## MAC MEETING TIME CHANGED

The Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee is now scheduled to meet from 3:30 to 5 p.m. the second Tuesday of every month. Meeting times and dates may change, so members of the public who would like to attend should confirm the time and date with the Mayor's Office at 441-7511. Meetings are normally held in the Mayor's Conference Room, 555 South 10th Street, and free parking is available in the lot north of the building.

## “UNWRAP THE JOY”

For the first time, the Mayor's Committee for International Friendship (MCIF) had a walking unit in the Star City Holiday Parade December 3. Participating with MCIF were Bob Chase of Chase Dance School, Modesta Putla of the Asian Cultural Center and the UNL Office of International Student Affairs.



# STORIES OF HOME TEAMS CHOSEN

Project teams have been chosen for Stories of Home, the Lincoln Arts Council's new public art project. Renowned artist Pepon Osorio from

Philadelphia is leading the visual arts process, in which 12 professional artists have been teamed with 12 families to create sculptures telling the families' stories. The sculptures will travel throughout the community from June 2006 through February 2007. They will be shown together and separately in homes, schools, businesses and community centers. As part of the project, community partners will present performances, literary and educational activities and a new-media project for children. The goal of Stories of Home is to celebrate families and diversity and create a community dialogue about family experiences. For more information on Stories of Home, see the Arts Council's Web site at [www.artscene.org](http://www.artscene.org) or call Anne Pagel at 434-2787.



From left, artist Kristen Martincic; Stories of Home family Lin Quenzer, Barb Baier and Robbie Baier-Quenzer; and artistic director Pepon Osorio. Photo by intern Chad Petska.

The family representatives and their partnering artists are:

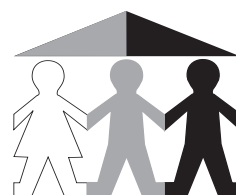
Khamisa Abdalla - Caitlin Applegate  
Zainab Al-Baaj - Kate Brooke  
Leo Yankton - Santiago Cal  
Micaela Sanchez - Larry Gawel  
Lela Knox Shanks - Ann Gradwohl  
Maida Kapetanovic - Robert Hillestad  
Barb Baier and Lin Quenzer - Kristen Martincic  
Jan Peregrine - Deborah Mitzlaff Koenen  
Susan Stevens - Leora Platte  
Laura Edmonds/City of Hallam - Larry Roots  
Anne Harrison - Rana Schmitz  
Teresa Nguyen - Robert Schwieger



## BEN CHANEY SPEAKS AT FREEDOM FUND BANQUET

The NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet November 5 featured a speech by civil rights advocate Ben Chaney, founder of the James Earl Chaney Foundation, named in honor of Ben's brother.

James, along with Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner were killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi in 1964 while attempting to register voters. The Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights, human rights and social justice. About 450 people attended the banquet, which had a theme this year of "Remembering the Legacy by Making a Difference." The event raises funds for scholarships and NAACP activities.



Lincoln Commission On  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION GETS ITS MESSAGE OUT

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) is raising awareness of its work thanks to funding from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"We found that many people living in Lincoln did not know that this city has its own equal opportunity commission," said Larry Williams, LCHR Executive Director. "It is our job to investigate complaints of discrimination in the workplace, housing and places of public accommodation. We also offer training opportunities for the whole community."

The awareness campaign includes two billboards that went up in October with the message "We Deal With Local Issues." A six-month billboard campaign on fair housing began in November. The messages also will be promoted on StarTran buses, and LCHR is starting a monthly half-hour television program on 5 CITY-TV called "LCHR: Addressing Discrimination in Lincoln, Nebraska."

More information on the LCHR is available at [lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov) and by calling 441-7624.



# The City Needs YOU!

Minority applicants needed for City boards and commissions

Mayor Seng makes many appointments to City boards, commissions and task forces, and she is seeking better minority representation. Please encourage qualified applicants to submit "board bank" forms to the Mayor's Office. The form and a list of boards and commissions are available on the City Web site, [lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov). Go to the Mayor's page and click on "Committees & Task Forces." For more information, contact Rick Hoppe in Mayor Seng's Office at 441-7511.



## WELCOME! HISPANIC CENTER WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

Carmela Sanchez de Jimenez is the new Executive Director of the Hispanic Community Center in Lincoln. She came to the Center in early December after working for two years in the Cancer Control Program of Nebraska Health and Human Services. In that position, she worked with groups serving minorities and medically under-served communities across the state to provide cancer information and technical assistance.

Carmela is overseeing the Center's transition from its former location at 23rd and "O" to the new site at 2615 "O" Street, Suite D. She said the new site is much more usable, offering space for meetings and classrooms, a computer lab and child care.

"The Hispanic Community Center serves a vital role in Lincoln," said Carmela. "Families that find it difficult to request assistance from other sources find that

they are welcomed at the Center. We serve as a bridge of cultural and linguistic understanding between the families in need and the general community. As our community continues to grow we must be prepared to serve the unique and comprehensive unmet needs of families. My goal is to serve the community. We begin by identifying gaps, building capacity and providing quality service to families and our partners."

Carmela also worked for the Lincoln Housing Authority for 10 years and served as the Service Coordinator for the Carol Yoakum Family Resource Center in Arnold Heights. She has a bachelor's degree in English from UNL and has taken graduate courses in Community and Regional Planning. Carmela is a founder of the Latino Arts and Humanities Council and a board member of the Lincoln Arts Council.

A lifelong Lincoln resident, Carmela is of Mexican descent and is bi-lingual. She has two adult sons and is married to Patricio Jiménez who is originally from Santiago, Chile.

## Congratulations To...

The 2005 recipients of the YWCA's Tribute to Women Awards: Zainab Al-Baaj, Mary Dickinson, Helen Abdali-Soosan Fagan, Ruth McKinstry and Marcee Metzger. Chrysalis Awards were presented to Nyalat Duop and Nargis Sadat. The Gladys Forsyth Award was presented to Time Warner Cable. The event October 14 was the 25th annual Tribute to Women awards ceremony. Information on all the award recipients can be found at [www.ywcalincoln.org](http://www.ywcalincoln.org).

The students recognized September 12 at the Hispanic Heritage Month youth rally at the State Capitol: Cruz Cabrera, Lexington High; Yesire Diaz, Crete High; David Gutierrez and Audrey Castillo, Lincoln Pius X High; and Jonatan Barreto, Norfolk High.

The 2005 recipient of the Gerald Henderson Human Rights Award, Judi M. Gaiashkibos, Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. She received the award during the 2005 Great Plains Symposium on Employment Issues October 4. About 80 people attended the Symposium, which featured a keynote address by Joseph Mitchell, a regional attorney from the Denver office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights presented the Symposium, which had the theme "Freedom to Compete: Remembering the 40th Anniversary of the Equal Opportunity Commission."

# MAYOR'S MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**Mayor Coleen J. Seng's Office  
441-7511**

*Designed by Citizen Information Center*

The mission of the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee is to identify and recommend policies and strategies that enhance and support the full and equal partnership of people of diverse racial, cultural, economic, gender and disabled communities in City government and Lincoln community affairs.

## ***Editorial Policy***

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This is a publication of the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee of the City of Lincoln. Material appearing in this publication shall be in accordance with the purpose, goals and official positions of the committee.

Submissions by community groups and individuals are welcome and will be considered for publication based on the following criteria: the article's compliance with the goals and official positions of the committee; the article's relevancy to the designated theme of that quarter's newsletter; and the length of the article. Articles may be accepted as written, edited or declined for publication.

Responsibility for final decisions lies with the committee chair and newsletter editors. Inquiries about this publication may be directed to the Chair of the Mayor's Multicultural Committee, Amir Azimi.



***If you need translation assistance for  
Cultural Crossroads, please call 474-3950  
for referral information.***

Office of the Mayor  
555 South 10th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68508